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Message Text

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65
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 SCCT-01 AID-05

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P R 071716Z JUL 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 504
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
JCS WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3177

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, US, NU
SUBJECT: AMERICAN CAPUCHIN TALKS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM

REF: (A) MANAGUA 3128, (B) MANAGUA 3007

SUMMARY: ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE AMERICAN CITIZEN CAPUCHIN GROUP WHICH SENT A LETTER TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA JUNE 13 ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS, SPOKE TO EMBOFFS ABOUT THE CHURCH'S GROWING INVOLVEMENT IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE, THE EXPULSION OF FATHER BERTRAND AND THE GUERRILLA SITUATION IN ZELAYA. END SUMMARY.

1. POLOFF AND DEFATT SPOKE AT LENGTH JULY 2 WITH AMERICAN CAPUCHIN FATHER PATRICK FORTON, WHO HAD UNTIL LAST MONTH WORKED IN THE SIUNA (ZELAYA) AREA AND IS CURRENTLY IN CHARGE OF THE CAPUCHIN HOUSE IN MANAGUA. THE EXPULSION OF FATHER
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BERTRAND (REF A), THE CAPUCHIN PROTEST LETTER ON HUMAN

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WERE DISCUSSED.

2. FATHER FORTON SAID THAT WHILE BERTRAND'S EXPULSION WAS NOT ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED, THEY WERE SURPRISED THAT GON WAS OPENLY CHOOSING TO DENY HIM RESIDENCE ON THE BASIS OF SUBVERSIVE CHARGES. BERTRAND, HE STATED, HAD A RATHER CAVALIER ATTITUDE TOWARD SUCH SECULAR OBLIGATIONS SUCH AS KEEPING HIS RESIDENCE STATUS IN GOOD ORDER, OBTAINING DRIVER'S LICENSE, ETC., AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY FOR GON TO CHALLENGE HIM ON ONE OF THESE TECHNICALITIES. FORTON ALSO ASSERTED THAT BERTRAND WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LODGING TWO SANDINISTAS IN SEPTEMBER 1975 AND HE WAS COVERING UP FOR FATHER WILLIAM LULOFF WHEN HE ADMITTED HIS INVOLVEMENT BEFORE THE MILITARY INVESTIGATIVE COURT IN JANUARY 1976.

3. FORTON WAS UNCERTAIN HOW THE ORDER WOULD REACT TO BERTRAND'S EXPULSION BUT A PUBLIC PROTEST BOTH IN NICARAGUA AND IN THE U.S. WAS POSSIBLE. HE ADDED THAT BERTRAND WAS THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO AFTER HEARING OF THE EXPULSION MIGHT ATTEMPT TO REENTER NICARAGUA ANYWAY IN ORDER TO EMBARASS THE GON. FORTON THOUGHT THAT TWO OTHER CAPUCHINS MIGHT BE EXPELLED AS A RESULT OF THEIR STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT THAT SO FAR HARASSMENT HAS BEEN LIMITED TO GON'S REFUSAL TO RENEW THE PRIESTS' HAM RADIO LICENSES.

4. FORTON REVEALED THAT CAPUCHINS HAD BEEN TALKING WITH PAPAL NUNCIO, MSGR. GABRIEL MONTALVO, ABOUT CHURCH ATTITUDE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES FOR PAST THREE MONTHS. MONTALVO AGREED THAT SOME PROTEST WAS IN ORDER, BUT HAD ASKED CAPUCHINS TO DELAY RELEASING LETTER UNTIL NICARAGUAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE ACTED ON SAME ISSUE. BUT NUNCIO, SAID FORTON, WAS PLEASED WITH LETTER AND SAID HE WOULD REDOUBLE EFFORTS TO PRESSURE HOLDOUTS, ESPECIALLY BISHOP OF GRANADA, TO APPROVE PROTEST.

5. FORTON WAS LAST IN THE SIUNA AREA DURING THE LAST WEEK OF MAY AND CLAIMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO DIMUNITION OF GUARDIA ABUSE AT THE TIME HE LEFT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FSLN GUERRILLAS WERE STILL OPERATING IN REGION AND HE DID NOT PERCEIVE ANY REDUCTION IN THEIR STRENGTH. THEY CONTINUED TO ROAM
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THE REGION MAKING CONTACTS WITH CAMPESINOS AND AVOIDING THE GUARDIA PATROLS. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT NEARLY ALL CLASHES BETWEEN GUARDIA AND GUERRILLA HAD BEEN INADVERTENT. FORTON BELIEVED THAT CAMPESINOS WERE SOMEWHAT MORE SYMPATHETIC TO FSLN NOW THAN SIX MONTHS AGO AS A RESULT OF GUARDIA OPERATIONS. ALTHOUGH HE CLAIMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME CASUAL AND RANDOM KILLINGS OF CAMPESINOS BY GUARDIA, MOST OF THE "DISAPPEARANCES" ALLUDED TO IN CAPUCHIN LETTER WERE THE

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RESULT OF PLANNED OPERATIONS. FORTON ALLEGED THAT GN PATROL LEADERS (GENERALLY YOUNG LIEUTENANTS) USUALLY SEEMED TO HAVE LISTS OF FAMILIES SUSPECTED OF COOPERATING WITH FSLN AND GO DIRECTLY TO THOSE SPOTS. FORTON EXPLAINED IN SOME DETAIL WHY HE THOUGHT THAT THE NEARLY HUNDRED "MISSING" IN AREA HAD IN FACT BEEN EXECUTED BY GN. WITH REGARD TO HELICOPTER STRAFING MENTIONED IN CAPUCHIN JUNE 13 LETTER, FORTON WAS EYEWITNESS TO ONE INCIDENT WHERE IT WAS USED TO SUPPORT GROUND OPERATIONS AGAINST SUSPECTED GUERRILLA BASE. ON THE BASIS OF THIS EXPERIENCE, HE THOUGHT THAT THE TACTIC WAS PROBABLY NOT BEING USED INDISCRIMINATELY.

POYM COMMENT: FORTON'S INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF PAPAL NUNCIO IN STIFFENING CHURCH'S ATTITUDE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COMES AS A SURPRISE. NUNCIO, THE SON OF A FORMER CONSERVATIVE COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, HAD BEEN HERETOFORE CONSIDERED AS AN ALLY OF THE GOVERNING ESTABLISHMENT AND HIS RELATIONS WITH ARCHBISHOP OF MANAGUA MIGUEL OBANDO Y BRAVO, WHO IS FAVORABLY VIEWED IN ANTI-SOMOZA CIRCLES, HAVE BEEN LESS THAN FRIENDLY AS A RESULT OF BOTH PHILOSOPHICAL AND PERSONAL DIFFERENCES. HIS APPARENT ACTIVISM IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD SHOULD LEND GREATER PRESTIGE TO THE MOVEMENT. THEBERGE

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